

Part of the city's fabric

Since 1843, Nottingham's School of Art and Design has been an important part of the creative life of the city, says

Marjolijn Brussaard

Nottingham Trent University is built on the School of Design created to support the lace and textile industry in Nottingham in 1843, thus establishing an inextricable link between the University and arts organisations in Nottingham.

So strong was that link that, 20 years after the school began, the citizens of Nottingham and the textile and lace manufacturers donated the purpose-built Waverley Building to the School. That building is still used by the School of Art & Design at Nottingham Trent University. During the past 170 years, it has developed into one of the best Schools in the country, drawing artists and designers to Nottingham, many of whom stay in the area after graduation to start their own practices. A thriving arts community is essential to helping these enterprises survive and is why the University plays such a prominent role in establishing and supporting arts spaces in the city.

The School of Art & Design started the Bonington Gallery, recognised internationally for showing work of renowned artists. The concept for Nottingham Contemporary was first developed by Nottingham Trent University in the mid-1990s and was then taken forward by Nottingham City Council. Nottingham Contemporary and the School now share strong links focused on public engagement and working with the broader community of Nottingham.

Nottingham's welcome to emerging artists and designers helps to

explain why so many of our graduates stay in the area to join artists groups and initiatives. Most of these have strong links to the communities around them and enjoy collaborations with organisations like New Arts Exchange (NAE), another partner of Nottingham Trent University.

NAE champions, embraces and engenders cultural diversity to ensure that diversity resonates more widely at a national and international level. As a University, we support that mission by working in partnership on projects – students volunteer or do internships at the gallery and alumni find work in or through NAE. We also work in partnership with Broadway Media Centre to create a real life learning experience for our MA Film students. We are active in some of their schemes, such as Projector, which nurtures the potential of people in the creative and digital content industries, giving them opportunities to maximise their potential in order to create and develop successful businesses.

The School of Art & Design is also closely related to Primary – an artist-led space which exists to support creative research and to develop new ways of engaging with audiences; and to Backlit – an artist-led studio based in one of the most deprived areas in Nottingham, creating workshops and activities which directly respond to local audiences. One Thoresby Street is an artist-led studio run by our alumni which gives current students work experience. Around the corner is the Surface Gallery which houses exhibits by our Fine Art students.

It is no wonder therefore, that the Arts Council considers Nottingham to be one of the most thriving artistic communities in the UK and has recognised the valuable role Nottingham

Trent University plays in supporting that.

Our lectures and professors are active in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and gladly share their experience and contacts with their students. Most cultural venues and initiatives in Nottingham have a member of staff of the School of Art & Design on their boards. Big events like the World Events Young Artists in 2012, which Nottingham Trent University hosted with partners in the city, brought together 1,000 artists from 100 countries.

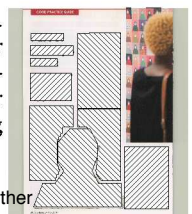
Exhibiting work is also part of the professional training of our students. Our degree shows feature a range of activities throughout the city such as a photography route, where students find their own locations to showcase their work and Decorative Arts students create pop-up shops as part of their live trading module.

The Visual Arts department supports alumni students not only by providing information on accessing financial help towards their first exhibition but also by sharing information through their networks and by giving expert advice.

For students and alumni who would like to start their own business or set up as sole traders, Nottingham Trent University has developed the HIVE – a purpose-built centre for entrepreneurship and enterprise. Together with another initiative, Future Factory, the University supports the development of small and medium enterprises in the city.

Collaborations start early at Nottingham Trent University. Our Visual Arts department started the Saturday Art Club in partnership with the Sorrell Foundation to provide young people the opportunity to study art and design. It aims to nurture talents, improve confidence and raise aspirations while introducing young people to university.

Engagement is more than just being part of the community, however. We use critical inquiry and other artistic methods to add extra meaning to community engagement. For example, Wonderland is an exciting



new project which stimulates new perspectives through participation and engagement, conceived one of our alumni: Rhiannon Jones.

The School of Art & Design at Nottingham Trent University feels a strong connection with the communities in Nottingham and aims to add value by:

- starting art and design communities
- showing and selling work
- engaging in critical debate

on issues in society

- starting businesses
- engaging with society

From its conception, the School of Art & Design has been an integral player in Nottingham's creative community. We have a rich history – and a bright future.

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